

# Special Education



Special education is specially designed instruction provided to meet unique needs of children with special needs, ages three through 21. The special education process must be initiated by a referral to a special education committee from a parent, teacher or health care provider who observes signs of physical or behavioral challenges that interfere with learning. The committee determines whether the child needs a full and comprehensive evaluation, which can only be conducted with parental consent.

## Eligibility

A full evaluation consisting of a variety of tests and procedures identifying a child's areas of strength and weakness determines a child's eligibility for special education services. A child's ability to function in the following areas may be assessed:

- Academic
- Cognitive
- Behavioral
- Physical
- Developmental
- Speech and language

After the evaluation is completed, the results are compared with the definitions of various disability categories defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act:

- Intellectual disability
- Hearing impairments
- Visual impairments
- Deafness/blindness
- Speech-language impairments
- Emotional disturbance
- Autism spectrum disorders
- Traumatic brain injury
- Orthopedic impairments

- Specific learning disabilities
- Developmental delays
- Other health impairments
- Multiple disabilities

## Individualized Education Program and Placement

If a child is found to need special education services, the parents and the school work together to develop an Individualized Education Program. By law, an IEP is a written outline about the child and the educational program designed to meet his or her needs. The child is then placed in what is determined to be the least-restrictive environment, that is the setting in which the child will be educated and how much time will be spent with children who are not disabled. A child with a disability should not be removed from the general education classroom unless the disability makes it necessary.

## Annual and Triennial Reviews

Once a year, the school system is required to review the child's IEP. Parents must be notified in writing of the annual review meeting and who will be attending. At least three people should attend the IEP meeting — the parent(s), the teacher and a representative of the school system who is authorized to commit school resources.

A triennial review is conducted at least every three years to determine if the child continues to meet criteria for special education and related services as defined by the IDEA.

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Exceptional Family Member Program support is available for military families with special needs. For more information, please contact your installation EFMP office or visit [MilitaryOneSource.mil/EFMP](https://MilitaryOneSource.mil/EFMP), an official Department of Defense website.